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PECULIARITIES OF SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF THE FOOTBALL CLUBS

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СТРАТЕГІЙ СОЦІАЛЬНО ВІДПОВІДАЛЬНОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ ФУТБОЛЬНИХ КЛУБІВ

МАРКЕТИНГ

Summary. *Вступ.* In today's world, market leaders succeed not only by taking into account economic indicators, but also by building the social component of their business on the basis of corporate social responsibility.

Most global sports corporations are in the process of actively implementing effective socially responsible marketing strategies. The sports industry, by the nature of its activities, influences social behavior, and the leaders of the most popular sport, football, strive to create a positive image through the implementation of social initiatives.

Based on the official websites of leading football clubs, the article analyzes the content of strategic marketing initiatives that take place in their management practices. The socially responsible marketing of football clubs involves a number of strategies that increase brand awareness, promote fan loyalty and increase profits, thus benefiting society.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the strategies of socially responsible marketing implemented in the activities of the football clubs, with their subsequent adaptation to the marketing strategies of sports enterprises in Ukraine.

Materials and methods. The study is based on an analytical method of the data on the influence of social media on brand popularity, expert forecasts and analysis of the media platforms. General scientific methods such as synthesis, comparison and generalization are used.

Results. The article examines the role and importance of social responsibility in modern marketing strategies of popular football clubs. Based on the analysis of socially responsible marketing strategies of the top-rated football clubs in Europe, the key areas of marketing strategies that are relevant in modern society are identified.

When implementing socially responsible marketing, football clubs generate projects that include such components as community engagement; sponsorship and partnerships; social media presence; content creation; experience marketing; other corporate social responsibility initiatives; and ethical and socially responsible practices.

Conclusion. The symbiosis of positively implemented areas of socially responsible marketing by the most popular football clubs creates a real halo of opportunities for modernizing the marketing strategies of domestic enterprises in the field of sports.

Prospects for further research are to substantiate the strategy of socially responsible marketing of enterprises in the field of sports based on the forecasting of key performance indicators.

Key words: socially responsible marketing, socially responsible marketing strategies, sports, partnership, sponsorship, football club.

Анотація. *Вступ.* В умовах сучасного світу лідери ринку досягають успіху не лише при врахуванні економічних показників, а й при побудові соціальної складової бізнесу, в основі якої покладена корпоративно соціальна відповідальність.

Більшість світових спортивних корпорацій знаходиться на стадії активного впровадження ефективних стратегій соціально відповідального маркетингу. Сфера спорту за специфікою своєї діяльності впливає на суспільну поведінку, зокрема лідери найпопулярнішого виду спорту – футболу, дбають про створення позитивного іміджу через впровадження соціальних ініціатив.

За даними офіційних сайтів футбольних клубів, проаналізовано зміст стратегічних маркетингових ініціатив, які мають місце в їх практиці управління. Соціально відповідальний маркетинг футбольних клубів передбачає низку стратегій, які підвищують впізнаваність бренду, сприяють лояльності вболівальників і збільшують дохід, приносячи користь суспільству.

Метою статті є аналіз стратегій соціально відповідального маркетингу імплементованими у діяльність футбольних клубів Європи з подальшим їх адаптуванням до маркетингових стратегій підприємств у сфері спорту в Україні.

Матеріали і методи. Застосовано загальнонаукові методи, такі як синтез, порівняння та узагальнення.

Результати. У статті проведено дослідження ролі і значення соціальної відповідальності бізнесу у сучасних маркетингових стратегіях футбольних клубів. Виходячи з аналізу стратегій соціально відповідального маркетингу найрейтинговіших футбольних клубів Європи, були відокремлені ключові напрямки маркетингових стратегій, які є нагальними в сучасному соціумі.

Футбольні клуби при імплементції соціально відповідального маркетингу генерують проєкти, що включають в себе такі складові як залучення громади; спонсорство і партнерство; присутність у соціальних мережах; створення контенту; маркетинг досвіду; інші ініціативи корпоративно соціальної відповідальності; етичні та соціально відповідальні практики.

Перспективи. Симбіоз позитивно реалізованих напрямів соціально відповідального маркетингу найпопулярнішими футбольними клубами створює справжній ореол можливостей для модернізації маркетингових стратегій вітчизняними підприємствами у сфері спорту.

Перспективами подальшого дослідження є обґрунтування стратегії соціально відповідального маркетингу підприємств у сфері спорту на основі прогнозування ключових показників ефективності.

Ключові слова: соціально відповідальний маркетинг, стратегії соціально відповідального маркетингу, сфера спорту, партнерство, спонсорство, футбольний клуб.

Problem statement. In the context of open business integration, social responsibility of business is a necessary component and the core of competitiveness and successful development of the company. When building their own marketing strategy, football clubs are increasingly paying attention to socially responsible marketing, as consumers in the modern world prefer those sports companies that care about society through the implementation of social projects.

The analysis of recent research and publications. Modern marketing strategies are increasingly being modified by enterprises taking into account factors of changes in the internal and external environment. The study of the concept of socially responsible marketing, its aspects of implementation in the activities of enterprises in the field of sports are reflected in the works of such scientists as: García C. [13], Sean Hamill [14]; Ali A., Belhimer I. [17]; Baena V. [23], Garcia Cherold D. M., Harrison K. K., Bukstein S. J. [24], Moyo T., Duffett R., Knott B. [25]. Scientists in their works emphasize the importance of implementing socially responsible marketing strategies by football clubs.

The purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to analyze the strategies of socially responsible marketing implemented in the activities of the football clubs, with their subsequent adaptation to the marketing strategies of sports enterprises in Ukraine.

The overview of the main material (the results of the researches). Today, in the era of openness in doing business, society is increasingly responding to the implementation of social initiatives in all areas of activity. The formation of socially responsible marketing strategies is determined not only by the specifics of the industry or the scope of the organization's activities, but also by the country.

Ukraine has approved the Concept of Business Social Responsibility Development until 2030 [1], but

while in Ukraine the most common practices of corporate social responsibility implementation are implemented in such areas as development and improvement of working conditions of personnel, charitable assistance, consumer protection and support, as well as assistance to the Armed Forces, the world experience demonstrates initiatives in the field of health care, support of children's interests, environmental friendliness, food support systems, improvement of labor policy, support of housing construction, and other areas [2; 3].

The specifics of countries determine the popularity of different sports. For example, in the UK, Asia and Australia, cricket is the most popular sport (2.5 billion fans), while in America and Japan baseball is the most popular sport (500 million fans) (Table 1) [4].

Logically, marketing influence on society in a socially responsible way is based on such preferences. If baseball and rugby are not as popular as football in Ukraine, influencing social behavior through these sports means narrowing the target audience.

Due to the popularity of football, the top-rated football clubs in Europe were considered for a deeper study of the features of socially responsible marketing strategies in the field of sports for further implementation of successful foreign practices in the marketing activities of domestic sports organizations (Fig. 1).

Real Madrid C.F. recognizes the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with its fans and uses a variety of platforms and activities to communicate with its supporters. The club has many sponsors, including Adidas, Emirates, Audi, and Movistar, who provide financial support and help promote the club's football and other initiatives. In addition, the club interacts with the community by participating in various events. For example, they hosted a virtual

Table 1

The most popular sports according to the fans' rating

Ranking	Sport type	Number of fans	Regions
1	Soccer (sokka)	3,5 billion	Europe, Africa, Asia, America
2	Cricket	2,5 billion	Asia, Australia, United Kingdom
3	Ice hockey	2 billion	Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia
4	Tennis	1 billion	Europe, Asia, America
5	Volleyball	900 billion	Europe, Australia, Asia, America
6	Table tennis	850 billion	Europe, Africa, Asia, America
7	Basketball	800 billion	America, Oceania, Middle East
8	Baseball	500 billion	America, Japan
9	Rugby	475 billion	Oceania, South Africa, England
10	Golf	450 billion	America, Oceania, Europe

Source: [4]

charity tournament during the COVID-19 lockdown, collaborating with other clubs and athletes to raise funds for medical personnel.

As mentioned above, Real Madrid C.F. has a strong presence on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The organization uses these platforms to communicate with fans, advertise events, and share nostalgic content.

The football club promotes its youth program and invests in the development of young players. This strategy helps to create a sense of connection with the community and demonstrates their commitment to nurturing local talent. The organization supports the principles of equality, as evidenced by the players and fans of different backgrounds and nationalities,

bringing together people of different races, religions, and cultures. The club also supports various charitable causes and often makes donations to non-profit and public organizations, and actively holds events to raise funds for charitable purposes.

Interestingly, the organization has even participated in activities to support sustainable development, in particular, to reduce environmental pollution and to find renewable energy options. The football club prioritizes the well-being of its players, offering high salaries and providing support both on and off the field. The football club also provides a safe and respectful environment for its athletes. It values interaction with fans and often asks them to ask questions of the players, creating a sense of community. The club organizes

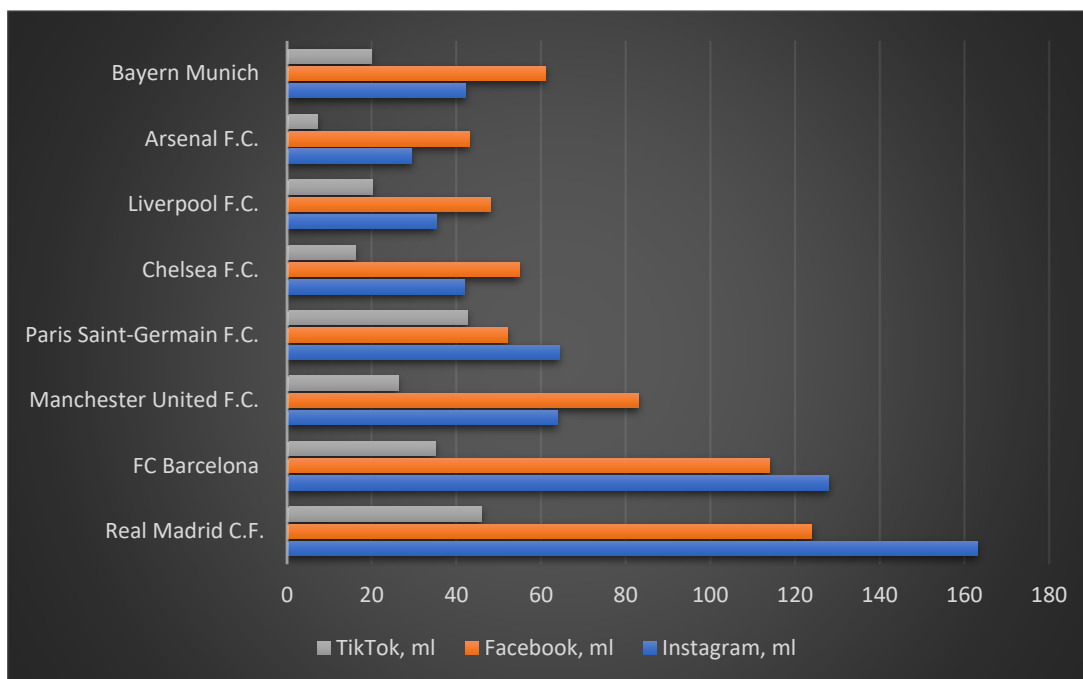


Fig. 1. Top-rated football clubs

* data as of 17.07.2024

Source: developed by the author according to [5–12]

activities and events that bring fans closer to their favorite players [5; 13].

Thus, the organization fully takes into account the main groups of stakeholders in socially responsible marketing. The key activities in Real Madrid C.F.'s socially responsible marketing strategies are: building long-term relationships with fans as the main stakeholders; recruitment of players with the involvement of the media; global coverage and broadcasting; sponsorship and partnerships; community engagement; social media presence; youth development; equality promotion; charitable initiatives; environmental awareness; and player assistance.

FC Barcelona is actively involved in its community, promoting social initiatives and supporting various charities, and pays great attention to youth development, including through the La Masia youth academy and the FCB Escola Varsovia football school in Warsaw. The football club prioritizes its fans and members, known as "socio". It offers membership benefits, exclusive content and opportunities to engage fans. The organization also listens to fans and adapts its strategy to meet their needs and expectations. For example, with a global fan base, the football club has established football academies known as Barça Academies to find talent and strengthen its international presence around the world.

The organization cooperates with various brands such as Nike, Coca-Cola and Estrella Damm. It promotes children's rights and humanitarian aid through a partnership with UNICEF. Like the club analyzed above, FC Barcelona values its players and provides them with comprehensive support, including fitness training, medical care, and personal development programs. The club recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability and goes beyond legal requirements to make ethical and philanthropic commitments. The Barça Foundation supports a variety of social and cultural projects, and the motto "More than a club" reflects FC Barcelona's desire to go beyond the standard functions of a club. The organization is owned by its members and the board is elected: this structure ensures accountability and allows members to influence the direction of the club's development [6; 14; 15].

Thus, the key activities in FC Barcelona's socially responsible marketing strategy are: social media presence; global reach; community engagement; fan-centric approach; partnerships and sponsorships; corporate culture; environmental awareness; ethical and philanthropic initiatives.

Manchester United F.C. contributes to solving environmental and social problems at the regional, national and international levels by using its brand to raise awareness and support various socially responsible activities. The organization's product strategy involves the promotion of a wide range of products: T-shirts, training kits, goalkeeper kits and special products for women and children (including for charitable purpos-

es). Charitable activities include donations, in particular to partner schools, to support food banks, medical personnel and schools, especially during the pandemic. Also during the pandemic, the club launched the Hero on the Frontline initiative to recognize and share stories of healthcare professionals who have dedicatedly helped others; collaborated with the World Health Organization on the #BeActive campaign, encouraging fans to stay active by maintaining social distancing.

The club has a global audience reach, playing matches at various venues around the world, and uses a dedicated TV channel, MUTV, to broadcast matches and promote its products. It cooperates with global retailers and e-commerce platforms to distribute its merchandise and has numerous sponsorship and commercial agreements, including sponsorships and partnerships with sportswear companies. The club has official partnerships with companies in various sectors, such as the automotive industry, financial services and telecommunications; it cooperates with Nike, General Motors, Sharp Electronics and other popular brands. Digital media and social platforms are actively used to advertise and attract fans.

The organization follows a premium pricing strategy due to its effective market positioning and high level of fan loyalty. The club offers tiered memberships and subscription options, catering to different levels of fan engagement and accessibility. The organization is actively reaching out to older fans, especially those who are isolated. Manchester United F.C. operates soccer schools and camps around the world, promoting the sport and promoting its brand to a global audience.

The key activities of Manchester United F.C., as in the sports organizations discussed above, are: sponsorship and charity; community engagement; global social media presence; ethical and philanthropic initiatives, etc [7].

Paris Saint-Germain F.C. is owned by Qatar Sports Investments and implements many socially responsible projects, including: initiating and supporting projects to reduce environmental impact (partnership with the Paris Climate Agreement to promote sustainable development). Collaborates with its community and implements projects such as the PSG Foundation, which has three main goals: to help young people find their place in society and the world of work, to help children from poor neighborhoods, and to help sick children. It collaborates with various brands, including Nike, Air Jordan and Accor Live Limitless as its main partners. Takes care of its players by providing them with the necessary support and resources. Values its fans and offers various opportunities for involvement in its activities, provides exclusive content, events and promotes the formation of impressions; has a strong ultra culture ("Boulogne Boys" and "Supras Auteuil" groups). The club invests in youth development and has a strong youth academy, and has a PSG Eternal Fund to raise donations for various initiatives [8; 16; 17].

The key activities of Paris Saint-Germain F.C. are: social responsibility for all segments of stakeholders; launching and implementing CSR projects to promote sustainable development, social projects, including helping sick children; partnerships and charity; programs to involve the community in its activities; youth development programs, ultra culture formation, etc.

Chelsea F.C. has developed a corporate social responsibility program that involves close ties with stakeholders. For example, the club maintains a partnership with CLIC Sargent, a leading UK charity dedicated to treating childhood cancer. The football club has one of the largest Football in Society programs in the Premier League, reaching 200,000 children annually; it constantly raises significant funds for charities and good causes.

Social media platforms are used to communicate with global followers (more than 100 million people). Recognizing that Chelsea F.C.'s stadium can only accommodate a small portion of their fan base, the football club launched The 5th Stand, a mobile application designed to engage with fans around the world, particularly on match days. The app provides exclusive content, live streaming, text and audio commentary, enhancing the matchday experience for fans. The organization also uses augmented reality to allow fans to virtually try on new sets of sportswear. The football club creates video content that gives fans a glimpse into the lives of players off the field.

Membership packages such as "True Blue" and "Junior Blue" provide exclusive offers to increase fan commitment and loyalty. Chelsea F.C. provides financial services and media packages that combine traditional and new media, such as football's first financial portal, chelseafc.money.com. The football club has a digital consumer products division, Chelsea Digital Ventures, which provides new revenue streams and collects new customer data. Products for training, nutrition and health have been launched. The e-commerce website is constantly being improved to improve user experience and increase sales [9; 18; 19].

Thus, Chelsea F.C.'s corporate social responsibility is based on the results of market research. The football club is distinguished by its understanding of the global fan base, identification of target markets, community engagement, social media presence, membership packages, financial services and media packages, virtual clothing fitting, digital consumer products and a mobile application, as well as a large number of socially responsible programs.

Liverpool F.C. is focused on grassroots football, striving to make the sport accessible and affordable. According to a study by the Global Web Index [20], the club has a huge global fan base, with 96 million fans in India alone, so, realizing the importance of engaging with an international audience, the football club actively uses digital platforms and tours. The club values its fans and works to create effective engagement,

strives to demonstrate the value of its global fan base and provide exclusive experiences such as behind-the-scenes materials and fan events.

Liverpool F.C. has numerous sponsors and partners, including Standard Chartered, New Balance, Avon, Carlsberg and BetVictor. It cooperates with international charitable organizations such as Right to Play, whose mission is to help vulnerable children overcome the effects of war, poverty and disease through play. It participates in sustainable development and environmental impact reduction programs (for example, the Red Way program).

The football club enjoys the support of its players and managers, including Jurgen Klopp, who actively promotes the club's partnership. This support is crucial for the success of many marketing and business initiatives. Thus, the club's activities are characterized by significant revenue growth, with record financial results in recent years (due to increased turnover, media revenue, commercial revenue and matchday revenue).

Liverpool F.C. emphasizes racial and social equality. The football club has projects aimed at communicating with fans around the world, including in China, Indonesia, Australia and the United States, so the football club adapts its messages to different regions. Liverpool F.C. recognizes the importance of women's football and treats it as a separate business entity, supporting and investing in its development. The club has a well-known youth development program, demonstrating a commitment to supporting and nurturing young talent [10; 20; 21].

Thus, the key socially responsible activities of Liverpool F.C. are: community engagement; active interaction with the global fan base; partnerships and charity; support for players and managers; media and digital presence; promotion of sustainable development and environmental projects; support for the development of women's football; support for racial and social equality; charitable activities; youth development.

Arsenal F.C. engages the community through stakeholder engagement, including social media, digital projects and tours, and by partnering with major brands such as Emirates and Puma, who understand the club's brand and create innovative, engaging content. For example, Emirates' #Racetoth Emirates competition gave fans the opportunity to meet the players and win business class tickets. Stadium tours and visits to the club's museum also strengthen the fans' connection to the football club. The Facebook app allows fans to create their own banners, social games, access to in-game statistics and a one-stop shop for social media during matches. Overall, the club estimates its international fan base at around 100 million. The football club offers membership schemes with benefits such as access to tickets, access to an online TV player, merchandise, and unlocked content on social media platforms.

A wide range of merchandise, including shirts and memorabilia, is sold worldwide. Arsenal F.C. has

successfully implemented a premium pricing strategy. It participates in promotional activities with its sponsors and cooperates with other companies to improve the interaction with fans around the world. For example, the football club has signed an agreement with Nike to manage their merchandise department. Also, the club's advertising strategy is centered around their players, who are the most important asset of the organization. The company constantly releases training videos and commercials on its social media to increase fan engagement.

The football club guarantees proper support for its players and provides them with opportunities to communicate with fans. For example, they held an open training session in Australia, allowing fans to watch the players train live [11; 22].

Thus, Arsenal F.C.'s socially responsible marketing strategy includes building long-term relationships with stakeholders, including active community involvement in the club's activities; presence in social media; sponsorship, partnerships, charity; helping players as the company's main asset; and player-focused advertising.

Bayern Munich's experience emphasizes the importance of aligning the interests of all stakeholders and the weight of fans in the relationship. For example, the football club faced criticism from fans and human rights organizations over a controversial sponsorship deal with Qatar Airways, Qatar's state-owned airline and one of the club's main sponsors. Fans accused the football club of "sporting dilution," suggesting that the club's association with Qatar was an attempt to divert attention from the country's human rights record. Fans criticized the club for prioritizing financial gain over ethical considerations. The issue escalated in 2021 when club members disrupted a general meeting, calling for the club to cut ties with Qatar over human rights violations, particularly in the context

of the 2022 World Cup. Although the football club did not break this sponsorship relationship for some time and tried to maintain a dialogue with society, in June 2023, Bayern Munich announced the termination of this partnership.

Like the aforementioned FCs, Bayern Munich supports its players, invests in youth development, has strong sponsors such as Adidas, Audi, and Deutsche Telekom, promotes the unification of people of different cultures, and supports environmental projects [12; 23; 24].

Summarizing the above and based on [25], we conclude that socially responsible marketing of sports organizations involves a number of strategies that increase brand awareness, promote fan loyalty, and increase revenue, benefiting society. Among the most common projects in this regard are community engagement activities (youth sports and educational programs, environmental sustainability projects); sponsorship and partnerships (to financially support the club and improve the sponsor's brand image); social media presence (to communicate with fans); content creation (to expand audience reach); experience marketing (going beyond traditional advertising); other CSR initiatives (supporting youth development, partnerships with local charities, and other

Conclusions. Thus, it is quite reasonable to implement ethical, philanthropic, and sustainable development measures in the field of sports through transparent marketing that is in line with the company's values. The SPMS should take into account the specifics of the country and its stakeholders and be adaptive to their changing needs and priorities.

Prospects for further research are to substantiate the strategy of socially responsible marketing of enterprises in the field of sports based on the forecasting of key performance indicators.

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